

The HHC commander might also consider asking the battalion XO, or quite possibly the battalion commander, to conduct the command inspection once a year. This, too, will demonstrate to the soldiers that maintenance is a command responsibility. The battalion XO might be asked to select the best platoon's vehicles or address the mechanics—frequently the battalion's unsung heroes. If the HHC commander does not do this himself, he might ask the battalion commander to present the mechanic and driver awards to deserving soldiers.

This command involvement in unit maintenance in no way detracts from the responsibility of subordinate leaders to maintain their own equipment. The commander should demand that platoon leaders spend motor stables in the motor pool and brief him on their respective maintenance programs. He must also coordinate with the staff sections to ensure that their equipment is always combat ready. The battalion XO will be the HHC commander's most important ally in any maintenance related activity.

In addition, the HHC commander should not underestimate the time required to return the company to a high

state of readiness following an extended field problem. This task is complicated by the normal support functions that must continue while recovery procedures are in effect. Three full days should be allowed for a complete recovery, including layout inspections of operator's vehicle material, basic issue items, personal clothing and equipment, and weapons.

The challenges of commanding an HHC are numerous and varied. My best advice to an incoming commander would be "Don't take your soldiers for granted." They should be respected for the complexity of the roles and missions they must accomplish if the battalion is to succeed. Commanding a headquarters company may not sound as exciting as leading a rifle or airborne company on a night attack to seize an enemy objective, but the potential rewards are greater.

Without the HHC, the battalion simply ceases to function as an effective unit. The commander should therefore strive to build unit cohesion. Although individual platoons usually have a degree of cohesion, allegiance to the company is frequently lacking. A

mandatory company party once a year or a unit dinner with spouses and friends can help build cohesion.

When it comes to awards and badges, the commander should attach as much significance to a soldier who earns the Expert Field Medical Badge or a mechanic badge as to a soldier who earns the Expert Infantryman's Badge. The badges authorized for drivers with excellent safety records should be awarded on the spot, and a personnel activities center clerk who does an exceptional job should be recognized as often as a fire team leader.

In the final analysis, command of an HHC is not a reward for successful command of a line company. It is a recognition of an officer's potential to command the most diverse and complex company in the battalion.

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The New Executive Officer

Management by Objective

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An infantry lieutenant normally begins his Army career as a platoon leader. During this time, he learns and develops his own leadership style and managerial techniques. After about a year, he changes jobs and leads a specialty platoon, such as mortars, or becomes the company executive officer (XO).

Until recently, the XO was usually chosen from the senior lieutenants in the company, but due to the drawdown in today's Army and the overstrength of the officer corps, this has become a luxury. Now an XO, even a first lieutenant, may not be senior to all the platoon leaders working with him. As with any new job or promotion, the period of adjust-

ment can be difficult. Today's XO must overcome such adversities and learn his new job, often with little or no transition time.

To succeed, a lieutenant undertaking the job of XO must skillfully use and integrate management by objectives (MBOs). This process is not new to the Army. Initially, performance evalua-

tions and counseling procedures depict aspects of MBO. The Officer Evaluation Report, DA Form 67-8, requires supporting documents; officers must submit OER support forms stating their performance objectives. These objectives require that each job be directed toward the objective of the entire organization. The OER support form can be the basis for integrating performance appraisals, goal planning, and managerial leadership.

The identification of the XO's objectives depends upon the goals of his superior, the goals for the various sections, and the goals for the individual soldiers. The objectives need to be prioritized to correspond with those of the organization and its leader. The company commander needs to decide and clearly state what he expects of his subordinates, and the XO needs to know the results for which he will be held accountable.

The XO's objectives should spell out his contribution to the attainment of company and battalion objectives, his duties and responsibilities, and his personal goals. His objectives should be clearly spelled out, and they should mutually support unit objectives. To obtain balanced efforts, he should see that the objectives on all levels are geared to both short-range and long-range considerations. The comments on the XO's OER support form should reflect his commander's priorities. Individual or mutually supported objectives expressed by both the company and the battalion commanders should be restated in the XO's support form.

The Army provides definable duties and responsibilities that serve as a basis for all XOs. These were most recently defined by the Army in Military Qualification Standards II Infantry Branch (STP 7-1111-MQS, A-3):

- Coordinate logistics, maintenance, medical, and food service support.
- Keep abreast of the tactical situation.
- Assume command in the absence of the commander.
- Supervise the operation, movement, security, internal arrangement, and organization of the company trains.

- Work closely with the first sergeant, supply sergeant, communication chief, and aidmen.

- Coordinate directly with the battalion executive officer, S-4, support platoon leader, and battalion motor officer.

Aside from these duties, there are usually other responsibilities that need to be turned into definable objectives. A list of these responsibilities might include: unit fund manager, training officer, maintenance officer, physical security officer, unit logistician, rations control officer, maneuver damage officer, communications officer, and nuclear biological chemical officer. Anything else that the commander delegates or requires from the XO also becomes a part of these overall responsibilities.

The last source of objectives for the XO's support form could focus on personal goals, past performance, and



expectations of subordinates. Every officer needs to include a section on professional development that covers Army Physical Fitness Test goals, marksmanship, and educational development. His experience as a platoon leader is a good source for the XO to use in developing clear and concise objectives for the company or, more specifically, his headquarters section.

The headquarters section is a diverse group of soldiers from various ranks and branches, and with differing expectations. In establishing objectives, the section must have goals that both the XO and the commodity area chiefs will support. It is an indication of success when individuals want to work toward objectives they have had a part in setting.

If he follows these procedures, the XO should have no difficulty in deter-

mining his specific duties and responsibilities. The difficulties arise in the way the XO translates his stated duties into a working OER support form that can be used by the battalion, company, and individuals in achieving pre-set goals.

A newly appointed XO's transition usually takes place during the most hectic and chaotic time period. The Army often makes changes without shifting into a lower gear, and the new XO must jump onto the company as if it were a speeding locomotive. Too often, he never regains his balance but constantly reacts to short-range crises. If, by chance, he lands firmly, he seldom has the luxury of seeing what is already established but tries to make it fit his own ideas and system. Careful planning can ease the transition and improve efficiency.

The first step in making MBO work for the new XO is making the OER support form a workable document, and this can be accomplished by tapping all available resources. As soon as the possible job change is announced, he should obtain copies of the battalion and company commanders' OER support forms. With these documents in hand, he should highlight the objectives common to both and compare them with those on the previous platoon leader's OER support forms.

The new XO should establish a calendar of appointments with the company commander, the outgoing XO, and the first sergeant as early as possible. The first of these meetings needs to be with the company commander. This interview needs to bring out questions about the commander's OER support form, his specific duties for the XO, the company's tactical standing operating procedures (SOPs), and immediate short-range missions. If the outgoing and incoming XOs plan and share the work before the job change, the transition will be less traumatic for everyone. The best advice for a lieutenant making this change is to try to gain as much knowledge as possible before he steps into the job.

The meetings with the outgoing XO should be informal and as frequent as

possible. The new XO should try to get as much information as possible from him while he is still available and ask him for a copy of his OER support form. He should receive—as a minimum—the following information:

- Current daily status of all personnel and equipment.
- Current requested logistical support.
- Current training schedules.
- List of routine meetings and suspense dates.

In addition, the outgoing XO should leave the necessary field manuals, documents, and supplies to continue the established daily routines.

The new XO's courtesy meeting with the first sergeant could prove to be the most beneficial and informative of all. The first sergeant needs to work closely with the XO, even though he is not formally in the XO's chain of command. The XO is the only officer who is directly involved with "beans and bullets," because support functions are normally associated with the first sergeant and the platoon sergeants. The first sergeant and the XO need to develop a working relationship in which there are clearly defined areas of responsibility. During these meetings, the XO should use the first sergeant to gain insight on the individuals who make up the company. The XO should respect the first sergeant's decisions but should not let him assume areas of responsibility that are traditionally and necessarily the XO's.

The first sergeant should give the XO enough insight into the various commodity areas to ensure that he understands the daily working routine. With this information, the new XO needs to establish headquarters section objectives as well as individual commodity objectives for each of the following areas: drivers, supply sergeant, communication sergeant, training sergeant, and armorer. The XO is responsible for the informal staff of the company and needs the expertise of all the commodity area chiefs to assist him in his job. The success of these individuals, in turn, determines his own success.

The XO's success can also be attributed to his relationship with the other

company XOs and the battalion support platoon leader. Once a lieutenant is appointed to the position of XO, he should seek advice from these other XOs. They are undergoing a similar training cycle, yet they are experienced veterans in the job and can get a different perspective from outside their own companies. They can talk about their successes and failures. Each can think back to the XOs he observed while serving as a platoon leader, emulating the programs that were successful and avoiding the noticeable mistakes of others. The other XOs, along with the support platoon leader, control all of the battalion's training resources. The XO should therefore develop into a team player, share ideas, and improve the battalion, which will then improve the individual companies.

The least formal, yet most influential, tie is between the company XO and the battalion XO. The battalion XO normally conducts weekly or, in some cases, daily training support and maintenance meetings and may use the company XOs as the source of necessary information. The company XOs should use these meetings to solve as many problems as possible, and they can use the battalion XO as a facilitator for information to the battalion primary staff.

With all of these formal and informal organizational ties, the XO now knows what to include and how to get information. The XO needs to know how to set his specific objectives in writing. The single most important word in establishing the objectives is *measurable*. Whenever possible, specific guidelines, suspense dates, numbers, or conditions should be given. The XO should include key phrases gleaned from his commander and set up realistic, yet *attainable*, subordinate objectives. The objectives should have built-in incentives for deserving soldiers. The XO should also use language that expresses teamwork and team effort, such as *coordinate* and *share*. Once the list of objectives is established, the XO needs to make sure it is not too long or redundant.

The OER support form is usually due one week after the change of assignment. Too often, though, it is meticu-

lously created, turned in, and then filed away—unread—until a change in commanders or another change in duty for the XO. The OER support form is supposed to be a plan for the items to be accomplished, and management by objectives fails in these cases because the support form is not effectively implemented.

Management by objectives requires self-discipline, because it demands much of the XO. The OER support form is too often a statement of lofty ideals and objectives that prove unattainable because of time constraints and higher priorities. If the support form is to be a working document, the XO's responsibilities need to be clearly defined, understood, and met.

The Army is an institution that is suited to the concept of management by objectives. The process has already been initiated with the OER support form, but it needs to become an ongoing process. As objectives change, the form should be updated. Information from subordinates should be taken into account so that common objectives are expressed.

The job of company executive officer can be both rewarding and demanding. The new XO's success is based on a multitude of formal and informal ties. The duties vary from unit to unit, and the responsibilities can vary from day to day. The job is an integral part of the battalion's success. Management by objectives is one means of keeping track of the essential role the XO plays. The planning of objectives on the OER support form is a critical step in the MBO process. The other functions—organization, personnel, leadership by example, and control through inspections and evaluations—are elemental needs that must be met. The efficiency—and therefore the success—of an XO is measured by the accomplishment of his stated objectives.

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